In a Thesaurus or MeSH search in EBSCOhost, what does it mean to explode a term?

Several of EBSCOhost's secondary databases support a thesaurus (MEDLINE, CINAHL, Environmental Policy Index and ERIC). Using the thesaurus, users have the option to explode a term via a check box. Exploding a term means that the search will retrieve all references indexed to that term, as well as all references indexed to any narrower term(s).

Thesaurus terms appear in a tree structure. This means that some terms will have other, narrower terms, under them.

For example, in MEDLINE, the term hand has the following narrower terms under it:

Hand+
  Fingers+
    Thumb
  Metacarpus
  Wrist

Each term followed by a + will have additional narrower terms under it.

If you check the box to explode the term hand in the thesaurus, the search term will appear as hand+.

Performing the search will return articles where any of the chosen term or the narrower terms is indexed as a heading of that article. Results would include those that have fingers or the narrower terms under fingers+ (thumb) as a heading, as well any other terms listed under hand+.

The explode option will only appear when there are narrower terms available.